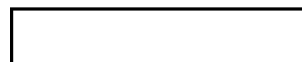


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6 April 1956



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OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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State Department review completed

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THE ARAB-ISRAELI SITUATION

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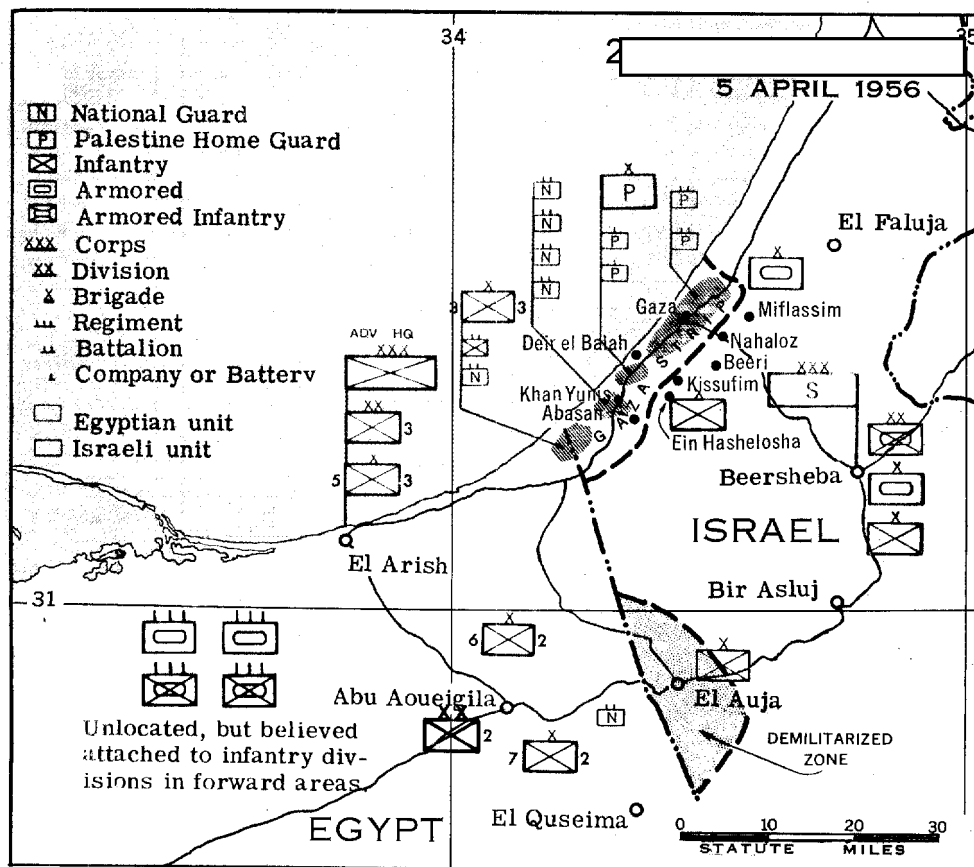
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1. THE FIGHTING ALONG THE GAZA STRIP

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A series of armed clashes between Egyptian and Israeli forces along the Gaza strip culminated in a general exchange of small arms, mortar and artillery fire on 5 April. This is the most serious incident in this sector since the Israeli raid on Khan Yunis on 31 August-1 September 1955. While it is possible that Egypt or Israel may find in this incident the occasion for further action which could lead in turn to all-out war, the circumstances suggest that neither side is deliberately seeking war at this time.

During the past week casualties, including fatalities, have become more numerous in the Gaza



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clashes. The latest incident appears to have developed out of the earlier patrol actions in which three Israelis and one Egyptian were killed.

Egypt has charged that, commencing at 0030 on 5 April, Israeli forces opened fire on Egyptian strip settlements of Gaza, Deir el Balah, Khan Yunis, and Abasan. Egyptian forces then claim to have returned the fire and a general exchange took place all along the border throughout the day.

According to an Israeli military spokesman, Egyptian forces early in the morning launched the first of a series of seven attacks against the three Israeli border settlements of Kissufim, Ein Hasheloshah, and Nahaloz. Other reports assert that the settlements of Miflassim and Beerli were also attacked. In each case Egyptian forces withdrew after receiving Israeli fire.

UN truce supervisor General Burns on 5 April ordered a cease-fire by midnight. Earlier on 5 April, Israeli foreign minister Sharett had warned of "grave results" unless Egypt halted its attacks, asserting that Israel "reserved freedom of action in self-defense."

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2. PRAVDA DENOUNCES CRITICISM OF PARTY BY MEMBERS

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Pravda's latest comment on the anti-Stalin drive indicates that destruction of the Stalin myth has led to criticism of the Communist Party itself.

In an editorial on 5 April, Pravda states that at recent party meetings, including one held in a scientific institute, certain members "utilized inner party democracy to make slanderous statements directed against the party's policy and its Leninist foundations." "Under the guise of condemning the cult of the individual some rotten elements are trying to question the correctness of the party's policy."

According to Pravda, the party permits free discussion of policy but "has never tolerated and will not tolerate petty bourgeois licentiousness, and particularly antiparty statements, in its midst, even if they are few in number."

Pravda's statement of the permissible limits of criticism is an attempt to keep the reaction to the anti-Stalin drive within safe bounds. Criticism of the party is equivalent to criticism of the regime itself. The attack on Stalin is apparently producing more freedom of discussion than the leadership will countenance. The regime faces a dilemma in attempting to stimulate intellectual initiative among such crucial groups as scientists without encouraging criticism of fundamentals.

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3. FIRST CHINESE COMMUNIST COMMENT ON
DENIGRATION OF STALIN

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Communist China's first comment on the Soviet re-evaluation of Stalin appears in a 4 April People's Daily editorial based on discussions held at a meeting of the Chinese Communist Party's politburo. The Chinese comment follows, in general, Moscow's justification of its attack on Stalin.

The editorial does not indicate that the Kremlin's denigration of Stalin has created any real problems of party or government policy for Peiping. It calls for "serious" study of the works of Stalin, especially those "correctly summarizing Soviet experience in construction." The Chinese formula has been that Stalin's theories were applied and developed--i. e., altered where necessary--by Mao Tse-tung. In the current comment, Stalin's theories are said to have been "crudely applied" by previously discredited Chinese leaders up to 1935--the year in which Mao became the party's leader.

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The editorial suggests that the Chinese Communist Party will not abandon its special treatment of Mao Tse-tung, which has continued since the Soviet party congress. Stalin's "serious mistakes" are said to have derived primarily from his isolation from "the masses," whereas the Chinese party is said to be based firmly on the "mass line." Peiping has justified Mao's personal leadership of the Chinese party in recent months on the ground that he above all other Chinese leaders "feels the pulse of the broad masses."

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4. SOVIET LEADERS ASSIGN TOP PRIORITY TO DISARMAMENT

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[REDACTED] At a Kremlin reception on 3 April, Premier Bulganin told the French ambassador and the American chargé that the Soviet government attaches first priority to disarmament. At the same reception, Khrushchev said that "the question of peace, that is to say that of disarmament, takes first place while the German question and all others come next." He expressed agreement with French premier Mollet's published statement that the West had been mistaken in placing German unification ahead of disarmament at the Geneva foreign ministers' conference.

The American chargé believed that the Soviet government is confident that it has made such appealing concessions that the West will find it difficult to avoid discussing them seriously or to reject them. He also suggests that the Soviet leaders believe their new proposal on reduction of conventional armaments will evoke sympathy in the uncommitted areas and among some circles in Europe and, if accepted, will increase Soviet resources for self-development and foreign assistance.

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5. DIEM CONSIDERING MILITARY ACTION AGAINST ISLANDS CLAIMED BY CAMBODIA

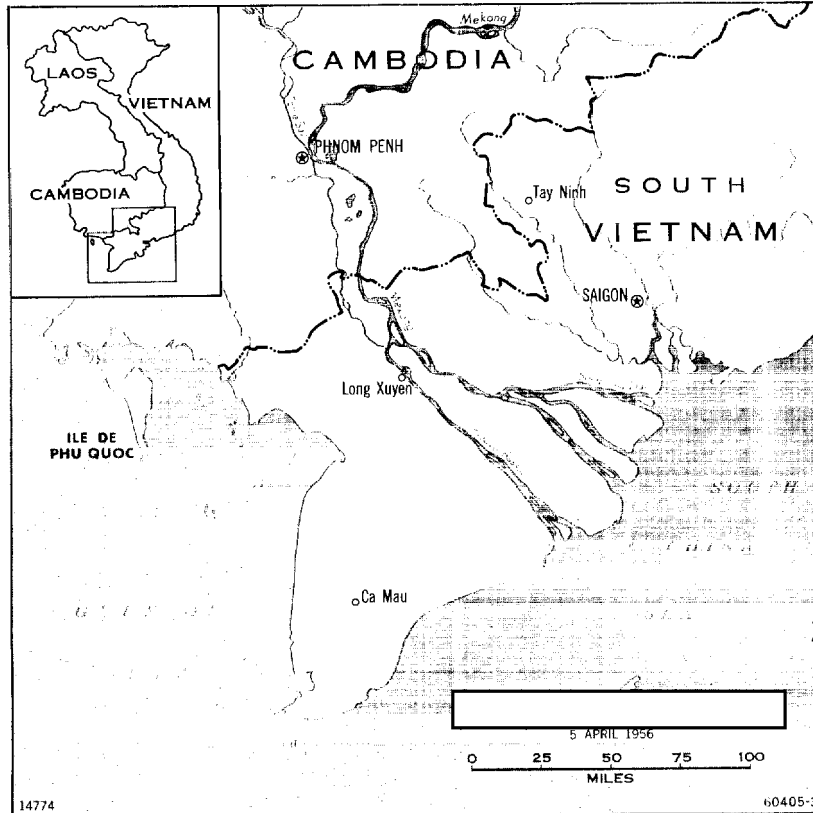
South Vietnam's President Diem has
stated [REDACTED] 25X1
that his government probably will soon
be involved in a serious controversy
with Cambodia over two small islands near Phu Quoc. Ac-
cording to Diem, these islands, which he claims are clearly
Vietnamese territory, were occupied recently by Cambodian
troops. He is therefore considering sending Vietnamese
army elements without warning to drive out the Cambodians.

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Comment

Cambodia's claim to the islands is vague
and is apparently based on the conten-
tion that sovereignty was illegally transferred when Indo-
china was under French control. Phnom Penh issued a



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strongly worded communiqué several months ago denouncing Vietnamese intrusion and interference with Cambodian fishing vessels in the area.

Relations between Cambodia and South Vietnam have recently been severely strained as a result of a series of border incidents and bitter recriminations which have led to the closing of the border between the two countries. Phnom Penh, however, last week indicated a willingness to seek a settlement of this dispute. Any military action as proposed by Diem would seriously prejudice the possibility of a settlement and stimulate anti-Western sentiment in Cambodia, where the view is widely held that the Diem government is under Western influence.

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6. LAOTIAN PREMIER URGED TO MEET PATHET LAO LEADER IN HANOI

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[REDACTED]

The Indian chargé in Vientiane is promoting the idea of a "courtesy visit" by Laotian premier Souvanna Phouma to Hanoi as the best means of settling the Pathet Lao problem, according to Ambassador Yost. The chargé said he felt the Viet Minh would lend its "good offices" for talks in Hanoi between Souvanna Phouma and Pathet Lao leader Prince Souphannouvong. He added that the Viet Minh might well "advise" the Pathets to accept the government's authority in the two northern provinces in return for a government pledge not to participate in military alliances or to permit the presence of foreign military installations or personnel in Laos.

Ambassador Yost believes the Indian diplomat is expressing the views Hanoi wants conveyed to the Laotian government.

Comment Souvanna Phouma has asserted he will treat any Communist approach with "great circumspection." Unless he feels his government's grievances against the Pathet Lao are adequately taken care of at the forthcoming talks of the Geneva co-chairmen in London, he may be attracted by a Communist offer to settle the problem without reference to the Geneva agreement.

Viet Minh terms for "persuading" the Pathet Lao to relinquish control of the two provinces would presumably include exclusion of American influence in Laos.

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THE ARAB-ISRAELI SITUATION
(Information as of 1700, 5 April)

See item 1, page 3, for comment on
Egyptian-Israeli fighting along the Gaza strip.

Israeli regular units have been with-
drawn from the Lebanese border during the past two weeks,
according to the Lebanese chief of staff. A similar Israeli
withdrawal from the Syrian frontier was reported previously.
These movements may indicate that Israel is more imme-
diately concerned over possible action along the Egyptian
border.

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